

PRESS RELEASE



A Postcolonial Exhibition Project in Five Acts

Opening of Act 1 in Reykjavik, Iceland March 24 – April 16, 2006

Art Exhibition in the Living Art Museum
Opening Friday, March 24, 5 – 8 pm
Press Preview Friday, March 24, 2 – 4 pm

Workshop at the Reykjavik Academy
March 25 – 28
All days 12 – 5 pm

Curated by Kuratorisk Aktion (Frederikke Hansen & Tone Olaf Nielsen) for
NIFCA, Nordic Institute for Contemporary Art

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The Colonial Investigation Begins in Reykjavik

On March 24, 2006, NIFCA launches the first act of the comprehensive exhibition project **Rethinking Nordic Colonialism** in Reykjavik, Iceland. Ten internationally acclaimed artists, theorists, and activists from Iceland, Greenland, Sweden, Trinidad, Tanzania, India, and the US will arrive in the former colony of Denmark to partake in a three-week exhibition and a four-day workshop open to the public. Together, they will look into the widely forgotten history of Nordic colonialism and discuss how this history continues to structure the Nordic societies today. Act 1 unfolds in the local flagship institutions, **The Living Art Museum** and **The Reykjavik Academy**, and marks the beginning of the project's five act-long rethinking of Nordic colonialism. The subsequent acts will take place in Greenland, the Faroe Islands, and the Sámi area of Finland from April through July, to conclude with the release of a DVD Box Set documenting the entire project at the end of the year.

Art Exhibition in the Living Art Museum

Titled **Past Colonies – Present Empires: How “Post” is Postcolonialism?**, this exhibition is intended to provide a general set of tools for approaching the colonial history of the Nordic region. Six artists, who have all worked thoroughly with the questions of colonialism and postcolonialism, participate with photography, installation, works on paper, video, and film. In different ways, they examine colonial dynamics of the past and look at the degree to which these dynamics are still at play today. Artists **Maryam Jafri**, **Steve Ouditt**, and **Kara Walker** all trace colonial patterns of the past in the present. Jafri's series of posters reveal how the media coverage of the contemporary Iraq war closely follows the way colonial wars of the past were packaged and presented in a form pleasant to the home audience. Ouditt's interactive installation of pictograms visualizes the ways in which colonizers have capitalized on already existing resources and peoples in the societies they colonized. Walker's work traces the racial, gender, and sexual hierarchies of present-day America back to the antebellum South with its plantation owners and slaves. Artists **Julie Edel Hardenberg**, **Ósk Vilhjálmsdóttir**, and **Inuk Silis Høegh & Asmund Havsteen-Mikkelsen** approach problematics in contemporary postcolonial societies. Hardenberg's

photographic work examines notions of identity and community in home ruling Greenland. Ósk Vilhjálmsdóttir analyzes the conflict between environment and corporate-led globalization in postcolonial Iceland in a large installation. Finally, Inuk Silis Høegh & Asmund Havsteen-Mikkelsen's multimedia project questions the position of Greenland in a globalized world order once full independence from Denmark is obtained. In addition, a comprehensive film program is screened daily in the Living Art Museum featuring films by acclaimed filmmakers **Stephanie Black**, **Randi Broberg**, **Laila Hansen**, **Isaac Julien**, **Alanis Obomsawin**, **Pratibha Parmar**, **Gillo Pontecorvo**, and **Paul-Anders Simma**. Titled **Silver Screen Resistance**, the program reflects four decades of postcolonial cinema with the newest film being made especially for **Rethinking Nordic Colonialism**. [Invitation card to the exhibition opening is attached]

Workshop at the Reykjavik Academy

The day after the exhibition opening, audiences are invited to partake in a four-day workshop at the Reykjavik Academy titled **Revisiting Nordic Colonialism: Local Amnesia – Global Impact**. Featuring five keynote speakers from the region and beyond, the workshop is intended to situate the rethinking of Nordic colonialism in a global context. It will discuss why the colonial past of the Nordic region is widely repressed and determine what questions are necessary for a progressive postcolonial debate in the region. Historian of Ideas and Associated Professor in Cultural Studies at University West in Sweden, **Mikela Lundahl**, will talk about Nordic complicity in and repression of European colonialism. Visual artist and Lecturer at the University of the West Indies, **Steve Ouditt**, delivers a paper on plantation economy and trademark capital. Professor at Bifröst School of Business in Iceland, **Ivar Jónsson**, will talk about colonialism and organizational dependency. Secretariat Director of the Tanzania Youth Coalition (TYC) and Steering Committee Member of the Sustainability Watch Network, **Humphrey Polepole**, will address the relation between colonialism and Third World underdevelopment. Finally, Indian Scientist and Environmental Activist, **Vandana Shiva**, will contribute with a paper challenging dominant Western ideas. The workshop is moderated by local theorists and encourages discussion after each presentation. [A full workshop program is attached]

Coming Acts

The joint investigation of Act 1's participants will form the basis for the continued rethinking of Nordic colonialism in Acts 2 – 5. These acts will present a new series of exhibitions and discursive events featuring other artists, theorists, politicians, and activists. In total, the project presents 56 participants from all over the world, who exchange colonial and postcolonial experiences and strategies during the course of the project. **Rethinking Nordic Colonialism** represents a first attempt at writing a comprehensive history of Nordic colonialism and involves *all* the Nordic countries. It is based on extraordinary partnerships between important art and culture institutions in the region and supports the incipient postcolonial studies in the Nordic region. [For Act 2 – 5 details, see attached Exhibition Program or visit www.rethinking-nordic-colonialism.org]

Publication

Rethinking Nordic Colonialism is accompanied by a free 148-page User Guide containing a full event program as well as detailed descriptions of all the participants and their contributions. The User Guide will be also be available online at www.rethinking-nordic-colonialism.org from March 20, 2006.

Act 1 Venues & Admission

The Living Art Museum, Laugavegi 26, 3rd floor, 101 Reykjavik, +354 551 4350, nylo@nylo.is, www.nylo.is. Wednesday – Sunday, 1 – 5 pm, admission free.

The Reykjavik Academy, JL-house, 4th floor, Hringbraut 121, 107 Reykjavik, +354 562 8561, reykjavikur@akademia.is, www.akademia.is. Admission free.

Support

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